

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 SOFIA 02696 211511Z  
ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01  
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P 211422Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2155  
INFO USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: OEXC, SCUL, PFOR, BU  
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN OFFICIAL REACTION TO LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC  
"INCIDENT" IN SOFIA DECEMBER 7

REF: SOFIA 2587

1. SUMMARY: AS REPORTED REFTEL, DURING DEC 7 LAPO PERFORMANCE, THE ORCHESTRA, LED BY ITS MANAGER AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR, REFUSED TO GO ON STAGE FOR SECOND PART OF CONCERT (WHICH WAS BEING BROADCAST LIVE) UNLESS A SMALL GROUP OF "STUDENTS" WERE ADMITTED TO THE HALL. ON DEC 20 AMBASSADOR WAS CONVOKED TO MFA BY DAMYANOV, HEAD OF CULTURAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, AND GIVEN NOTE VERBALE PRECEDED BY ORAL COMPLAINT. THE WORD "PROTEST" WAS NOT USED, AND BOTH SIDES AGREED THAT THE EVENT HAD NO POLITICAL CHARACTER. HOWEVER, DAMYANOV STRESSED, AS DID THE NOTE VERBALE, THAT INCIDENT DID NOTHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BULGARIA AND THE US. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED REGRETS AND COMPLIMENTED BULGARIAN AUTHORITIES ON THEIR HANDLING OF LAPO VISIT INCLUDING THE DEC 7 EVENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AMONG POINTS MADE BY DAMYANOV WERE: INCIDENT HAS CAUSED "SERIOUS CONCERN AND ANXIETY" IN THE MINISTRY, PARTICULARLY SINCE SO MUCH GOOD WILL HAD BEEN SHOWN BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS IN MOVING FORWARD THEIR CULTURAL RELATIONS DURING THE YEAR, AND SIGNATURE OF CULTURAL AGREEMENT APPEARS IMMINENT. INCIDENT "INEXPLICABLE" TO GOB WHICH FOUND IT HIGHLY IMPROPER, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS NOT INTERPRETED AS DELIBERATE ACT. FACT THAT SOME COULD NOT OBTAIN TICKETS GAVE LAPO NO GROUNDS TO

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PAGE 02 SOFIA 02696 211511Z

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DISRUPT PERFORMANCE AND CAUSE DELAY OF LIVE RADIO BROADCAST. CONTRARY TO STATEMENTS MADE BY FLEISCHMANN (AND APPARENTLY BROADCAST BY BBC), BULGARIAN GOVT HAD MADE SPECIAL EFFORT TO GET TICKETS INTO HANDS OF MUSICALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SOPHISTICATED AUDIENCE, WHICH WAS PRECISELY THE REASON WHY FEW TICKETS HAD BEEN AVAILABLE AT BOX OFFICE. ALLEGATIONS THAT GOB HAD RESERVED TICKETS TO "SPECIALY SELECTED" (RATHER THAN TO MUSICALLY INTERESTED) PEOPLE WERE GRATUITOUS, INCORRECT AND DAMAGING.

3. KEY SENTENCE OF NOTE VERBALE WAS "MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE OF OPINION THAT BEHAVIOR AND ACTIONS OF THE CONDUCTOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE ORCHESTRA ARE ABSOLUTELY CONTRARY TO GENERALLY ACCEPTED NORMS FOR GUEST-PERFORMERS AND CANNOT BUT BE CLASSIFIED AS AN ACT OF IMPROPER BEHAVIOR AND DISRESPECT FOR BOTH THE BULGARIAN AUDIENCE IN THE CONCERT HALL AND THE ESTABLISHED REGULATIONS FOR ORGANIZING CULTURAL EVENTS IN THIS COUNTRY. THEREFORE THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE EMBASSY AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ORCHESTRA'S VISIT TO SOFIA IS RATHER SURPRISING." (THE NOTE ALLEGED THAT THE STATE DEPT REPRESENTATIVE ACCOMPANYING THE ORCHESTRA ON ITS TOUR, AND THE EMBASSY'S P&C OFFICER, DID NOT EXERT THEMSELVES SUFFICIENTLY TO GET THE ORCHESTRA TO RESUME ITS PERFORMANCE.)

4. AMBASSADOR, IN REPLY, GAVE DAMYANOV CATEGORIC ASSURANCE DEC 7 EVENTS POSSESSED NO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE, AND NOTED THAT NO SUCH MOTIVATION AHD BEEN ASCRIBED TO LAPO. EXPRESSING PERSONAL REGRETS, WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN COMMUNICATED TO SOFIACONCERT (AND OF WHICH DAMYANOV SEEMED AWARE), AMBASSADOR SAID HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR LAPO BUT BELIEVED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03     SOFIA 02696 211511Z

EVENT COULD BE BEST UNDERSTOOD AS OUTGROWTH OF EMOTIONAL ATMOSPHERE AND TEMPERAMENTAL CHARACTER OF HIGH-STRUNG ARTISTS. AMBASSADOR REJECTED THE IMPUTATION THAT ESCORT OFFICER AND P&C OFFICER HAD NOT TRIED TO GET THE ORCHESTRA BACK ON STAGE. HE CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT ALL CONCERNED WERE FULL OF ADMIRATION FOR EFFICIENCY OF ARRANGEMENTS IN SOFIA, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE ORCHESTRA'S UNHAPPY EXPERIENCES ELSEWHERE.

5. AT THE END OF THIS DISCUSSION IT WAS AGREED TO REGARD THE MATTER AS CLOSED.

6. COMMENT: INTERVAL BETWEEN INCIDENT OF DEC 7 AND MEETING DEC 20 INDICATES CAREFUL PREPARATION OF NOTE WHICH WAS PHRASED SOMEWHAT STRONGER THAN THE ORAL REMARKS MADE BY DAMYANOV, WHO SPOKE MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER (AND USED TERMS "SERIOUS CONCERN AND ANXIETY" TWICE). DAMYANOV'S REFERENCE TO GOODWILL AND COOPERATION, CULTURAL-SCIENTIFIC

AGREEMENT AND RECENT EXCHANGES ALL REFLECT CONTINUING  
BULGARIAN INTEREST IN STRENGTHENING CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH  
US. WE THUS HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT LAPO BEHAVIOR  
IN SOFIA WILL NOT HAVE LASTING EFFECT ON US-BULGARIAN CULTURAL  
COOPERATION. ARTISTICALLY, OF COURSE, THE ORCHESTRA WAS  
ONE OF THE GREATEST THINGS THAT HAS HAPPENED HERE IN SOME  
TIME.  
HERZ

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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**Concepts:** MUSIC, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS, NOTE VERBALE, DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS  
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